

got the strength and courage to go through what he did." Eventually Bucher, when he was wounded when the *Pueblo* was shelled, was beaten and tortured into signing a "confession," an act he also felt would save the lives of his crew.

During her husband's captivity, Rose Bucher, a native of my home State of Missouri, worked hard to make sure Americans did not forget the men of the *Pueblo*. Rose handed out bumper stickers reminding the public to "Remember the *Pueblo*." Finally, 2 days before Christmas 1968, Commander Bucher and the crew of the *Pueblo* were released one by one across the "Bridge of No Return" from North to South Korea. At the time Bucher stated, "It was like coming out of the grave."

On 28 January 2004, this courageous warrior passed from this world into the next. He was subsequently buried with honors at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in Point Loma, San Diego, California. Three men who served under Pete Bucher on the *Pueblo* carried the flag-draped coffin to its final resting place overlooking San Diego Bay.

Today, I am pleased to be joined by 26 of my House colleagues, both Republican and Democrat, in offering this resolution to honor Commander Lloyd "Pete" Bucher and the crew of the USS *Pueblo*. Pete Bucher and his crew sacrificed that each of us may enjoy the liberty for which so many others have given the ultimate sacrifice. In passing this resolution, we continue to remember the *Pueblo*.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 407 introduced by my colleague, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN). I would like to recognize the gentleman for his leadership and work in bringing forward this resolution to salute the service and extreme bravery of Commander Lloyd Mark Bucher and the crew of the USS *Pueblo*.

Sadly, Lloyd Bucher, who went by the name of "Pete," passed away earlier this year. With his passing, the tragic event of the capture of the USS *Pueblo* in 1968 by North Korea once again brings light upon this exceptional individual. Commander Bucher did not just have the unfortunate privilege of being the commander of the USS *Pueblo* when it was attacked by the North Koreans on January 23, 1968. It was his bravery, loyalty and steadfastness to his men that distinguished him as an extraordinary leader during a dark and very challenging time.

Pete Bucher's life is an American story. He was born in 1927. His parents died when he was an infant. He was adopted, but tragically, his adoptive parents also died during his childhood.

After seeing the film "Boys Town," he wrote to Father Flanagan asking if he could live there. According to a Boys Town account, Father Flanagan

sent him a train ticket, and Pete Bucher finally found a permanent home in Omaha, Nebraska.

At 17 years of age, Pete Bucher enlisted in the Navy. He went on to college at the University of Nebraska, and after graduating he became a naval officer and served for 27 years before retiring in 1973.

He might have lived an ordinary naval life if not for the terrible events that unfolded on January 23, 1968. As commander of the USS *Pueblo*, an intelligence gathering ship, Commander Bucher was ordered to cruise off the eastern coast of North Korea to intercept communications and gather intelligence. While on their maiden voyage and in international waters, the *Pueblo* armed only with two .50 caliber machine guns was attacked by three North Korean torpedo boats and a North Korean sub chaser.

The attack ended with one American crewman killed and a number of crew wounded, including Commander Bucher.

□ 1415

Despite radio calls seeking air support, no help ever arrived. Instead, the crew and its captain were taken as prisoners. Beaten, tortured, and starved nearly to death, the crew endured this brutality for nearly a year. Pete Bucher, as the leader of the crew, took the brunt of these punishments.

According to James Kell, a *Pueblo* survivor, many more sailors would have died without Bucher's sense of bravery and leadership. He bore the worst of the tortures and inspired his men to hang on. It was his concern for saving the life of his crew that made him a sailor's sailor, a sign of respect and admiration from his crew. On December 23, 1968, 11 months after their capture, the crew and the captain of the USS *Pueblo* were released. Many were crippled or nearly blind because of malnourishment they endured.

Yet Commander Pete Bucher would not receive the support and recognition that he deserved from his commanding officers. Instead, he faced an official court of inquiry that criticized him for surrendering his ship and recommended a court-martial. But Bucher was never charged. He continued to serve in the Navy and retired in 1973.

Today, we remember the *Pueblo*, and we salute the life and the courage of this exceptional individual and recognize the bravery of all those who served with him aboard the USS *Pueblo*. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 407, of which I am an original co-sponsor, saluting the life and courage of the late Commander Lloyd "Pete" Bucher, United States Navy (retired) and the crew of the USS *Pueblo*.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that two of the USS *Pueblo* crew members, First Class Petty Officer Donald R. Peppard and Seaman Ramon Rosales, hail from my Congressional district of El Paso, Texas. Both were among

the gallant men who served their country honorably in the face of much hardship. As you know, the members of the USS *Pueblo*, under the leadership of Commander Bucher, endured 11 months of excruciating captivity at the hands of the North Koreans without knowing if they would return to their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, this is merely a small recognition paying tribute to the late Commander Bucher and the crew of the USS *Pueblo*, for this country owes much more to them than we could ever reciprocate. I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in honoring the brave men of the USS *Pueblo* by supporting the passage of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 407.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING GRAVE CONCERN OF CONGRESS REGARDING CONTINUING GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES OF SYRIAN PEOPLE BY GOVERNMENT OF SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 363) expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the continuing gross violations of human rights and civil liberties of the Syrian people by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 363

Whereas the Syrian Arab Republic is governed by an authoritarian regime which continues to commit serious human rights abuses, including the use of torture and arbitrary arrest and detention;

Whereas the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003 states that Syria "significantly restricts freedom of speech and of the press", that "freedom of assembly does not exist under the law", and that "the Government restricted freedom of association";

Whereas Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers";

Whereas Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association";

Whereas Syria's September 2001 press law permits the government to arbitrarily deny or revoke publishing licenses for vague reasons and compels media to submit all material to government censors;

Whereas Syrian authorities have arrested, or, in the case of foreigners, expelled two journalists for writing critically about Syria's policies;

Whereas Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have reported that the security forces of Syria are targeting emerging Syrian human rights organizations, as well as their attorneys, in an apparent attempt to intimidate those organizations;

Whereas on March 8, 2004, Syrian security forces arrested more than 30 human rights dissidents and civilians at a sit-in in front of the parliament;

Whereas a United States diplomat who was watching the peaceful demonstrations was also arrested and held for an hour in what the United States Government called an unacceptable violation of diplomatic practice and which the United States protested "in the strongest terms";

Whereas Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law";

Whereas the criminal law of Syria provides for reduced sentences in cases of "honor" killings, and spousal rape is not illegal;

Whereas the infringement by Syria on human rights and civil liberties extends into the Lebanese Republic, which it continues to occupy in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions;

Whereas Human Rights Watch, in its 2003 World Report, stated that "political activists in Lebanon continued to demand the withdrawal of all Syrian forces from the country and organized demonstrations throughout the year, many of which the internal security forces dispersed forcibly";

Whereas hundreds of Lebanese civilians are believed to have been killed or "disappeared" by Syrian occupation forces or its secret police;

Whereas hundreds of Kurdish civilians were injured or killed in clashes with the Syrian authorities that began on March 12, 2004, in Qamishli, a city in northeastern Syria and, according to Syrian Kurdish sources, security forces used live ammunition against unarmed civilians; and

Whereas human rights and democracy groups in Syria have sponsored a petition urging greater freedoms and the release of all political prisoners, which has garnered more than 6,000 signatures: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) condemns the consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic;

(2) calls on the international community to adopt a resolution at the upcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly which details the dismal human rights record of Syria;

(3) expresses its support for the people of Syria in their daily struggle for freedom, respect for human rights and civil liberties, democratic self-governance, and the establishment of the rule of law;

(4) encourages the President and the Secretary of State to reach out to dissidents, human rights activists, and the nonviolent democratic opposition in Syria, and to assist them in their efforts; and

(5) urges the adoption and pursuit of these and other policies to seek a democratic government in Syria that will—

(A) bring freedom and democracy to the people of Syria;

(B) cease the illegal occupation by Syria of the Lebanese Republic;

(C) abandon support for terrorism by Syria;

(D) not pursue research, development, acquisition, production, transfer, or deployment of biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons, will provide credible assurances that such behavior will not be undertaken in the future, and will agree to allow United Nations and other international observers to verify such assurances; and

(E) live in peace and security with the international community.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Con. Res. 363, the concurrent resolution now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I want to thank the leadership and the chairman and the ranking member of the Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), for bringing House Concurrent Resolution 363 to the floor today. This important resolution expresses the grave concern of Congress regarding the continuing gross violations of human rights and civil liberties by the Syrian dictatorship.

The Syrian regime is one that not only supports and facilitates terrorist attacks against innocent civilians throughout the world, but also engages in a widespread campaign of terror against its own people. Throughout this year, Syria's tyrannical regime has intensified its crackdown against Syrian Kurds and pro-democracy forces inside the country. The arrest and the detention in the last few months of Syrian peaceful demonstrators clamoring for the right to exercise their fundamental liberties is but the latest example of the brutal regime of the dictatorship in Damascus.

International human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and others, have reported that the security forces of Syria are targeting emerging Syrian human rights organizations, as well as their attorneys, in an apparent attempt to intimidate those organizations into submission and silence.

Unfortunately, the gross violations of human rights are not limited to Syria's immediate borders. The repressive apparatus also extends into neighboring Lebanon, which Syria continues to occupy, making Lebanon a captive nation.

This fact was recently acknowledged by the international community through the adoption of United Nations

Security Council Resolution 1559, calling on all foreign troops to withdraw without delay from Lebanon and to stop meddling in the country's November elections. Hundreds of Lebanese civilians are believed to have been killed or disappeared by Syrian occupation forces or its secret police.

House Concurrent Resolution 363 details and condemns the persistent repression of our Syrian and Lebanese brothers and sisters at the hands of the terrorist regime in Syria. It articulates our support for Syria's human rights and pro-democracy activists and calls on free and democratic nations to take a unified stance and condemn the deplorable and heinous human rights record of the Syrian dictatorship. It expresses congressional support for the people of Syria in their daily struggle for freedom, for respect for human rights and civil liberties, for democratic self-governance, and for the establishment of the rule of law.

House Concurrent Resolution 363 further encourages the President and the Secretary of State to reach out to dissidents and to the nonviolent democratic opposition in Syria. It calls for the United States to assist them in their efforts to help bring freedom to Syria so that they can achieve the ultimate goal of a democratic form of government in Syria that is truly responsive to the needs of its people and has permanently abandoned any support for terrorism and the development of deadly unconventional weapons.

The people of Syria and the dissidents, such as the chairman of the Committees For the Defense of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria, need our support. Upon being temporarily released from jail last month, this human rights activist said: "I will persist. I will never retreat. And I will continue to exert more pressure for democratic initiatives."

My colleagues, we cannot stand idly by and allow the Syrian regime to continue these deplorable practices. We too must maintain the pressure on this pariah state. And so, accordingly, I ask my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I stand in strong support of this resolution.

This important resolution supports the people of Syria, who live under a violent, repressive regime. And I am delighted to commend my good friend and distinguished colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), for bringing this resolution before the Congress.

It was just 3 weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, that I was in Damascus, Syria, for a series of discussions and meetings with the government of Syria, specifically the foreign minister, our ambassador, and a number of people in Syrian academic and media life.

Last fall, the Syrian Accountability Act was approved overwhelmingly on a

vote of 398 to 4. That bill addressed Syria's behavior in the Middle East, including its sponsorship of terrorist groups and its continuing occupation of Lebanon and its willingness to allow terrorist groups to filter into Iraq. Since the passage of that act, Syria has continued to make only token efforts to prevent the infiltration of foreign terrorists into Iraq. It continues to host terrorist headquarters in Damascus, it maintains 17,000 Syrian troops in Lebanon, it supports the terrorist organization Hezbollah, it transfers Iranian arms to Hezbollah, and it continues its vicious anti-American propaganda on all government-controlled media.

When I met with President Assad in Damascus last year, I urged him to change his government's behavior, both at home and abroad, so that Syria at long last could rejoin the ranks of the civilized world. I repeated that message to Foreign Minister Shaara in a press conference last month in Damascus. Perhaps not surprisingly, while my press conference received considerable attention from the media throughout the region, the Syrian press was prohibited from covering the event. In fact, the Syrians let it be known before my trip that they would be displeased if I were even to hold a press conference. I nevertheless, of course, did so, fully aware that I was delivering a message with which most Syrians agreed but none could utter in public without the severest consequences.

The resolution before us is one result of Syria's failure to heed the advice that I and many others, including our Secretary of State Colin Powell, have given. Another result was an all-too-rare slap from the international community in the form of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, passed earlier this month and long overdue, which calls for an end to Syrian interference in and control of Lebanese affairs, the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, the disbanding of all militias in Lebanon, including Syria's Hezbollah terrorist movement.

The resolution before us today focuses on Syria's brutal suppression of dissent and human rights at home within Syria, for which Damascus must be held accountable. After all, nobody has suffered more from the brutality of the Syrian government than the Syrian people themselves.

Syria continues to commit egregious human rights abuses, including torture, arbitrary detentions of political prisoners without trial, imprisonment of parliamentarians who dare to deviate from the Baath party line, censorship and harassment of journalists, and the lightest of sentences for so-called honor killings.

According to Amnesty International, Syria is engaged in a campaign to harass and intimidate human rights organizations until their members leave the country. We cannot credibly say we favor political reform in the Middle

East if we ignore Syria's crimes against its own citizens.

In 2003, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights classified Syria as one of the world's most repressive regimes. It is very important that Congress be on record not merely to criticize the Syrian government for its actions abroad but, just as importantly, to express our support for the Syrian people in their struggle to achieve the kind of government they should have.

Mr. Speaker, a Syria that is accountable to world standards and norms, a Syria that respects its own citizens and no longer occupies Lebanon or hosts and supports terrorists must be a central goal of our essential project of reforming the Middle East.

□ 1430

In the long run, a Middle East in which people are stakeholders in public life offers the greatest hope for peace and safety in the region and beyond. I urge all of my colleagues to support this carefully crafted resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE).

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this important resolution, and I thank both of my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), for introducing this important resolution.

Despite recent sanctions put on Syria pursuant to the Syria Accountability Act by our government and warnings that the sanctions will continue until Syria ends their support for terrorism, Syria continues to play host to terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. We know Hamas took responsibility for the suicide bombings in Israel a couple of weeks ago, and yet Syria continues to harbor Hamas leaders. Despite claims that Syria is not an occupying force in Lebanon, recent reports indicate that Syria forced the Lebanese government to keep their hand-picked president in office for another term, basically violating the Constitution of Lebanon. So the fact of the matter is that Syria continues to interfere in Lebanese affairs and is, in fact, an occupying force.

Syria has committed a laundry list of human rights abuses not only in Lebanon but also against its own people. It has imprisoned hundreds of political prisoners without charges, including two journalists from Lebanon who wrote editorials against Syria's occupation.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken on several occasions regarding Syria's systematic oppression of the Syrian Jewish community. Those Jews who remain in Syria, and there are very few, they nonetheless face constant terror and intimidation from Syria's secret police, nightly curfews and have been forced to carry special identification cards.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join with me in supporting this resolu-

tion. Syria has proven to be a destabilizing force in the Middle East, and it is critical that we urge the international community to take a stand on Syria's abysmal human rights record.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a long-time supporter of human rights in the Middle East and throughout the world. Clearly, I am in support of human rights in Syria. Every human being deserves to be treated with respect and without the fear of persecution and death. I stand firmly against the use of torture, arbitrary arrest and detention. I cannot deny that Syria has a long way to go to meet the human rights standards that we have established. However, I do not believe complete condemnation of the nation of Syria will yield the results we seek. We must continue to push for freedom of the press and greater freedom for women, but I feel that we must engage Syria in a dialogue instead of turning a cold shoulder to them.

I also feel that it is worth reviewing the relationship between Syria and Lebanon. I do not believe we should condemn Syria for their relationship with Lebanon, but we must engage in an examination to determine if the relationship between Syria and Lebanon can be improved. We must seek to build relationships in the Middle East as opposed to tearing them down. Our goal is to establish greater stability and a more free society in the Middle East; to accomplish these lofty goals we must press forward with new initiatives as opposed to complete condemnations.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I support and applaud the authors of H. Con. Res. 363 for urging Syria to live in peace and security with the international community and for condemning Syrian human rights violations. The U.S. Congress is an appropriate venue for highlighting human rights abuses and forum for urging other nations to abide by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Every year Congress passes dozens of resolutions condemning human rights violations throughout the world. Unfortunately, while there are a plethora of countries that demand censure, the House of Representatives tends to focus more frequently on a few specific countries like the People's Republic of China, Iran and Syria; all countries that we must prod to do better. Many of the statements regarding human rights violations in H. Con. Res. 363 apply to numerous other countries in the world.

If we condemn one country and turn a blind eye to the very same abuses in another country, the magnitude and moral legitimacy of our censure is greatly diminished. For example, H. Con. Res. 363 condemns: "The family law of Syria as applied to Muslim women is governed by Sharia law and is discriminatory in marriage, divorce, and inheritance matters." But Sharia family law is also practiced in numerous other Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia.

Syria needs to understand that by passage of H. Con. Res. 363, the United States Congress expects Syria to improve its human rights record and adhere to the rule of law. Approval of H. Con. Res. 363 should also signal to other countries that the United States will continue to express its disapproval of violators of basic human rights and disregard of the dignities of its citizens.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 363, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR FREEDOM IN HONG KONG

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 667) expressing support for freedom in Hong Kong.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 667

Whereas according to the April 1, 2004, report by the Department of State entitled U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act Report, "The United States has strong interests in the protection of human rights and the promotion of democratic institutions throughout the world. The Hong Kong people share many values and interests with Americans and have worked to make Hong Kong a model of what can be achieved in a society based on the rule of law and respect for civil liberties";

Whereas according to section 103(3) of the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 (22 U.S.C. 5713(3)), "The United States should continue to treat Hong Kong as a territory which is fully autonomous from the United Kingdom and, after June 30, 1997, should treat Hong Kong as a territory which is fully autonomous from the People's Republic of China with respect to economic and trade matters";

Whereas the People's Republic of China has frustrated the gradual and orderly process toward universal suffrage and the democratic election of the legislature and chief executive in Hong Kong as envisioned by the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR; and

Whereas on April 6, 2004, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China declared itself, as opposed to the people of Hong Kong, the final arbiter of democratic reform and, on April 26, 2004, declared that universal suffrage would not apply to the election of the third Chief Executive in 2007 or to the election of all members of the fourth Legislative Council in 2008: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) declares that the people of Hong Kong should be free to determine the pace and scope of constitutional developments; and

(2) calls upon the President of the United States to—

(A) call upon the People's Republic of China, the National People's Congress, and any groups appointed by the Government of the People's Republic of China to guarantee that all revisions of Hong Kong law reflect

the wishes of the people of Hong Kong as expressed through a fully democratically elected legislature and chief executive;

(B) declare that the continued lack of a fully democratically elected legislature in Hong Kong is contrary to the vision of democracy set forth in the Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong, done at Beijing on December 19, 1984 (the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984); and

(C) call upon the Government of the People's Republic of China to honor its treaty obligations under the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 667 expressing support for freedom in Hong Kong. This resolution comes to the floor at an important time. Yesterday, the people of Hong Kong went to the polls to elect the members of their Legislative Council, and for the first time in Hong Kong's history, half of the seats in the Legislative Council were directly elected through universal suffrage.

Unfortunately, the remaining seats are still distributed among a cadre of narrow constituencies that receive disproportionate power over Hong Kong's governance. The people of Hong Kong, along with all other human beings, deserve universal suffrage and full, complete democracy. There is no city in the world that is better equipped to make the transition to self-governance.

Renowned for its open economy, transparency, and excellent rule of law, Hong Kong is widely regarded as the freest economy in the world. Hong Kong is also celebrated for its tradition of respect for civil liberties, including freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion.

However, despite a rich tradition of democratic values, the people of Hong Kong still lack the most basic of freedoms, the freedom to elect their own government. This year's massive pro-democracy march on July 1 attracted half a million of Hong Kong's residents. It was powerful evidence that the people of Hong Kong are interested in far more than just economic prosperity. The record voter turnout in yester-

day's legislative elections was further proof that the people of Hong Kong want to participate in the political process.

The people of Hong Kong have already been promised universal suffrage in their mini-constitution, known as the "Basic Law," but the document fails to outline a timetable for full democracy.

Last April, Hong Kong's legislature was robbed of its tremendous opportunity to implement complete democracy when the People's Republic of China abused its authority to reinterpret Hong Kong's "Basic Law." The National People's Congress in Beijing made the decision that Hong Kong could not have universal suffrage in the election of the chief executive in 2007 and in the election of the legislature in the year 2008. This outrageous decision unacceptably interfered in Hong Kong's internal affairs, it halted the city's orderly progress toward universal suffrage and crushed the democratic aspirations of the people of Hong Kong. Beijing proved yet again that it cannot be trusted to keep its commitments.

Last summer, the Chinese Communist Party tried to exert more authority over Hong Kong by pushing through anti-secession legislation that could be used to target groups such as the Falun Gong. Thankfully, a people's power movement in Hong Kong stopped this legislation from going forward.

Last winter, the Chinese news media launched vicious attacks against pro-democracy legislators in Hong Kong, using vitriolic rhetoric that harkened back to the days of China's cultural revolution. In the spring, freedom of the press in Hong Kong was compromised when three prominent radio talk show hosts resigned from their talk shows due to intimidation and threats relating to their participation in the democracy movement.

Over the past year, there have been numerous reports of vandalism against pro-democracy legislators. Even yesterday's election was marred by accounts of voter intimidation, as is documented in a recent report published by Human Rights Watch. Such tactics show that the Chinese Communist Party continues to distort the truth, relies on intimidation to control the people, and rules by coercion. While Beijing may not have directly precipitated all of these events, they have certainly fomented the sentiment behind them.

It is my hope that the people of Hong Kong will soon realize their hope for democracy. We congratulate them on the completion of yesterday's election and call on the PRC to respect the "one country, two systems" model and allow the people of Hong Kong to come up with a timetable for democratic reform.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting the people of Hong Kong as they work to realize their hope of real democracy.